

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 IO-06 SSO-00 NSC-05
NSCE-00 NEA-07 PM-03 SP-02 INR-05 INRE-00 CIAE-00
ACDA-10 DODE-00 /065 W
-----127692 121805Z /46

O 121700Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6539

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USUN NEW YORK 3266

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 13203

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PBOR, SO, ET, IT, US

SUBJECT: SOMALIA LOOKS TO USG FOR UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT

1. AT REQUEST OF FONMIN FORLANI, MFA'S ACTING DIRECTOR
FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS BRUNO BOTTAI ASKED CHARGE TO CALL AT HIS
OFFICE AUGUST 12 TO RECEIVE MESSAGE FOR USG RELAYED BY
SOMALI FONMIN RAHMAN BARRE. BARRE WAS RECEIVED IN ROME
AUGUST 11, BY FORLANI AND BOTTAI. (BARRE VISIT
WAS DESCRIBED BY PRESS AS A "THREE-DAY PRIVATE" ONE.

2. BOTTAI SAID THE ESSENCE OF THE MESSAGE WAS SOMALI GOVERN-
MENT'S SINCERE DESIRE FOR "GOOD, WARM" RELATIONS WITH THE
USG. SOMALIS HAD BEEN MOST PLEASED WITH PRESIDENT CARTER'S
DECISION TO SUPPLY SOME ARMS BUT NOW FEEL THAT USG IS COOLING
OFF TOWARD SOMALIA. SOMALI PRINCIPAL INTEREST IS NOT SO MUCH
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IN MILITARY HARDWARE BUT IN THE RAPID ESTABLISHMENT OF
A FRIENDLY POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP. BARRE HAD ASKED
IF GOI COULDHELP VIS-A-VIS THE US, HOPING THE
NORMALIZATION PROCESS COULD BE ACCELERATED. ITALIANS WERE STRUCK
BY SOMALI FEELING OF "ISOLATION" AND RELATED DESIRE TO IMPROVE
RELATIONS WITH U.S.

3. DURING CONVERSATION, BARRE MORE THAN ONCE ASKED ITALIANS WHETHER USG MIGHT UNDERTAKE SOME FORM OF MEDIATION IN THE HORN. WHETHER HIS QUERY WAS A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION, A REQUEST THAT THE USG SO INTERVENE, OR AN INDICATION OF SOMALI OPENNESS TO A USG OFFER WAS NOT CLEAR TO THE ITALIANS. BOTTAI INDICATED ITALIAN RESPONSE WAS TO EFFECT THAT THEY KNEW OF NO SUCH US PLANS.

4. SOMALIS, ACCORDING TO BOTTAI, ARE EXTREMELY WORRIED THAT IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS THEY MAY LOSE THEIR CURRENT MILITARY ADVANTAGE OVER ETHIOPIANS. BARRE ASSERTED THAT A THOUSAND ETHIOPIAN OFFICERS AND NCO'S ARE NOW IN USSR LEARNING ON CRASH BASIS HOW TO USE USSR-SUPPLIED EQUIPMENT. THAT FACT, ASSERTED BARRE, PLUS LARGE SOVIET TRAINING CONTINGENT, CUBANS AND ISRAELI ADVISERS IN ETHIOPIA AIDING EPMG PERSUADE SOMALIS THAT TIME IS AGAINST THEM.

5. BARRE WAS "EXTREMELY PESSIMISTIC" ON RELATIONS WITH USSR, BELIEVING SOVIETS HAVE MADE CLEAR DECISION FOR ETHIOPIA. BOTTAI, ENLARGING SCOPE OF HIS REPORT TO INCLUDE INFORMATION FROM ITALIAN SOURCES, SAID GOI SHARES SOMALI VIEW. THERE IS, HE SAID, REASON TO THINK THAT THE SOVIETS MAY HAVE BEGUN TO CUT OFF SUPPLIES TO SOMALIA SOMETIME LAST MONTH. BOTTAI
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ADDED UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT SOVIET MILITARY ADVISORS IN SOMALIA ARE DEPARTING BUT WAS UNABLE TO SAY ON WHOSE INITIATIVE.

6. AT SPECIFIC REQUEST OF FONMIN FORLANI, BOTTAI ASKED THAT WE RELY TO USG THE ITALIAN CONCERN WITH INCREASING EVIDENCE THAT ISRAEL IS BEGINNING TO WEIGHT IN SIGNIFICANTLY ON ETHIOPIAN SIDE. FOR INSTANCE ITALIAN UNDERSTANDING THAT ISRAEL HAS A SUBSTANTIAL MILITARY ADVISORY MISSION IN ETHIOPIA WAS "CONFIRMED" AUGUST 11 BY VISITING NORTH YEMEN FOREIGN MINISTER ASNAJ, FORLANI'S LUNCHEON GUEST. ITALIAN EMBASSY IN TEL AVIV, MOREOVER, HAS REPORTED PRESENCE IN RECENT DAYS OF TWO ETHIOPIAN MILITARY MISSIONS. BOTTAI SAID GOI RECOGNIZED ISRAELI CONCERN LEST RED SEA BECOME "ARAB SEA", ADDING THAT GOI HAS HAEARD THAT ISRAELI UNITS ARE ALREADY PATROLLING THE ERITREAN COAST. BOTTAI SAID GOI WONDERED WHETHER THE USG MIGHT NOT SUGGEST TO ISRAELI GOVERNMENT TO PONDER WHETHER A MODERATE ARAB PRESENCE ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE RED SEA (ERITREA) WOULD NOT BE PREFERABLE TO A SOVIET ONE.

7. BOTTAI VOLUNTEERED NO INFORMATION ON BILATERAL ITALO-SOMALI ASPECTS OF AUG. 11 TALKS (PRESUMABLY INCLUDING ITALIAN THINKING RE SUPPLY OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO SOMALIA), EXCEPT TO NOTE BARRE'S DENIAL THAT SOMALI UNITS ARE OPERATING IN OGADEN, AND GOI DILEMMA OF ITALIAN INTERESTS IN BOTH SOMALIA AND ETHIOPIA.HOLMES

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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